

Guide to *Lectio Divina*

Choose a word or phrase of the Scriptures you wish to pray. It makes no difference which text is chosen, as long as you have no set goal of “covering” a certain amount of text. The amount of text covered is in God’s hands, not yours.

Read. Turn to the text and read it slowly, gently. Savor each portion of the reading, constantly listening for the “still, small voice” of a word or phrase that somehow says, “I am for you today.” Do not expect lightning or ecstasies. In *lectio divina*, God is teaching us to listen, to seek him in silence. God does not reach out and grab us but gently invites us ever more deeply into his presence.

Ponder. Take the word or phrase into yourself. Memorize it and slowly repeat it to yourself, allowing it to interact with your inner world of concerns, memories, and ideas. Do not be afraid of distractions. Memories or thoughts are simply parts of yourself that, when they rise up during *lectio divina*, are asking to be given to God along with the rest of your inner self. Allow this inner pondering, this rumination, to invite you into dialogue with God.

Pray. Whether you use words, ideas, or images — or all three — is not important. Interact with God as you would with one who you know loves and accepts you. Give to God what you have discovered during your experience of meditation. Give to God what you have found within your heart.

It is not necessary to assess the quality of your *lectio divina*, as if you were “performing” or seeking some goal. *Lectio divina* has no goal other than that of being in the presence of God by praying the Scriptures.

Fr. Luke Dysinger

Lectio Divina: Ordinary Time

Sunday, November 15, 2020

The parable of the ten virgins Preparing for the sudden coming of God in our life Matthew 25:1-13

1. Opening prayer

Lord Jesus, send your Spirit to help us to read the Scriptures with the same mind that you read them to the disciples on the way to Emmaus. In the light of the Word, written in the Bible, you helped them to discover the presence of God in the disturbing events of your sentence and death. Thus, the cross that seemed to be the end of all hope became for them the source of life and of resurrection.

Create in us silence so that we may listen to your voice in Creation and in the Scriptures, in events and in people, above all in the poor and suffering. May your word guide us so that we too, like the two disciples from Emmaus, may experience the force of your resurrection and witness to others that you are alive in our midst as source of fraternity, justice and peace. We ask this of you, Jesus, son of Mary, who revealed to us the Father and sent us your Spirit. Amen.

2. Reading

a) The Division of the Text to Help in the Reading:

Matthew 25:14-15: The master distributes his goods among his servants
Matthew 25:16-18: The way of acting of each servant

Matthew 25:19-23: The rendering of account of the first and second servant
Matthew 25:24-25: The rendering of account of the third servant

Matthew 25:26-27: Response of the master to the third servant

Matthew 25:28-30: The final word of the master which clarifies the parable

b) Key for the Reading:

In this 33rd Sunday of the Ordinary Time we shall meditate on the Parable of the Talents which deals with two very important themes and very up to date: (i) The gifts which each person receives from God and the way in which he receives them. Each person has qualities, talents, with which he can and should serve others. Nobody is only a pupil, nobody is only a professor. We learn from one another. (ii) The attitude with which persons place themselves before God who has given us his gift. During the reading, we shall try to be very attentive to these two points: which is the attitude of the three servants regarding the gifts received and which is the image of God that this parable reveals to us?

c) Text:

“It is like a man about to go abroad who summoned his servants and entrusted his property to them. To one he gave five talents, to another two, to a third one, each in proportion to his ability. Then he set out on his journey. The man who had received the five talents promptly went and traded with them and made five more. The man who had received two made two more in the same way. But the man who had received one went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. Now a long time afterwards, the master of those servants came back and went through his accounts with them. The man who had received the five talents came forward bringing five more. ‘Sir,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with five talents; here are five more that I have made.’ His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and trustworthy servant; you have shown you are trustworthy in small things; I will trust you with greater; come and join in your master's happiness.’ Next the man with the two talents came forward. ‘Sir,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with two talents; here are two more that I have made.’ His master said to him, ‘Well

done, good and trustworthy servant; you have shown you are trustworthy in small things; I will trust you with greater; come and join in your master's happiness.' Last came forward the man who had the single talent. 'Sir,' said he, 'I had heard you were a hard man, reaping where you had not sown and gathering where you had not scattered; so I was afraid, and I went off and hid your talent in the ground. Here it is; it was yours, you have it back.' But his master answered him, 'You wicked and lazy servant! So you knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered? Well then, you should have deposited my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have got my money back with interest. So now, take the talent from him and give it to the man who has the ten talents. For to everyone who has will be given more, and he will have more than enough; but anyone who has not, will be deprived even of what he has. As for this good-for-nothing servant, throw him into the darkness outside, where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth.'"

3. A Moment of Prayerful Silence

so that the Word of God may enter into us and enlighten our life.

4. Some Questions

. . . to help us in our personal reflection.

- a) Which is the point of this text which has pleased me the most and which has struck me more? Why?
- b) In the parable the three servants receive according to their capacity. Which is the attitude of each one of them concerning the gift received?
- c) Which is the reaction of the master? What does he demand from his servants?
- d) How should the following phrase be understood: "To everyone who has will be given more and he will have more than enough; but anyone who has not will be deprived even of what he has"?
- e) What image of God does the parable reveal to us?

5. For Those Who Wish to Deepen the Theme

For those who wish to go deeper into the text.

a) Context of our Text in the Gospel Matthew:

The "Parable of the Talents" (Mt 25:14-30) forms part of the 5th Sermon of the New Law (Mt 24:1- 25:46). These three parables clarify the context relative to the time of the coming of the Kingdom. the parable of the Ten Virgins insists on vigilance: The Kingdom of God can arrive from one moment to the next. The parable of the talents orientates on the growth of the Kingdom: the Kingdom grows when we use the gifts received to serve. The parable of the Final Judgment teaches how to take possession of the Kingdom: the Kingdom is accepted, when we accept the little ones.

One of the things which exercise greater influence in our life is the idea that we have of God. Among the Jews of the class of the Pharisees, some imagined God as a severe Judge who treated the persons according to the merits acquired by the observance of the law. That caused fear and prevented the persons from growing. It prevented them from opening a space within themselves to accept the new experience of God which Jesus communicated. To help these persons, Matthew narrates the parable of the talents.

b) Commentary on the Text:

Matthew 25:14-15: *A door to enter into the story of the parable*

The parable tells the story of a man, who before setting out on a journey, distributes his goods to his servants, giving five, two and one talent, according to the capacity of each one of them. A talent corresponds to 34 kilos of gold, which is not a small amount! In the last instance, all receive the same thing, because each one receives

“according to his capacity,” The one who has a big cup he fills it, the one who has a small cup, he also fills it. Then the master goes abroad and remains there a long time. The story leaves us a bit perplexed! We do not know why the master distributed his money to the servants, we do not know which will be the end of the story. Perhaps the purpose is that all those who listen to the parable must begin to confront their life with the story told in the parable.

Matthew 25:16-18: The way of acting of each servant.

The first two servants worked and doubled the talents. But the one who received one talent buries it, to keep it well and not lose it. It is a question of the goods of the Kingdom which are given to persons and to communities according to their capacity. All receive some goods of the Kingdom, but not all respond in the same way!

Matthew 25:19-23: The rendering of account of the first and second servant

After a long time, the master returns to take an account from the servants. The first two say the same thing: “Sir, you gave me five / two talents. Here are other five / two which I have gained!” And the master responds in the same way to both: “Well done, good and trustworthy servant, you have shown that you are trustworthy in small things, I will trust you with greater, come and join in your master’s happiness.”

Matthew 25:24-25: Rendering of an account of the third servant.

The third servant arrives and says: “Sir, I had heard you were a hard man, reaping where you had not sown and gathering where you had not scattered, so I was afraid, and I went off and hid your talent in the ground. Here it is, it was yours, you have it back!” In this phrase there is an erroneous idea of God which is criticized by Jesus. The servant sees in God a severe master. Before such a God, the human being is afraid and hides himself behind the exact and meticulous observance of the law. He thinks that acting in this way he will avoid the judgment and that the severity of the legislator will not punish him. This is how some Pharisees thought. In reality, such a person has no trust in God, though he trusts in himself and in his observance of the law. It is a person closed up in himself, far from God and does not succeed to be concerned about others. This person becomes incapable of growing like a free person. This false image of God isolates the human being, kills the community, does not help to live in joy and impoverishes life.

Matthew 25:26-27: Response of the master to the third servant.

The response of the master is ironic. He says: “You wicked and lazy servant! So, you knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered? Well, then, you should have deposited my money with the bankers, and on my return, I would have got my money back with interest!” The third servant was not coherent with the severe image which he had of God. If he had imagined God so severe, he would, at least, have deposited the money in the bank. This is why he was condemned not by God, but by the wrong idea which he had of God and which left him more terrified and immature than he was. It was not possible for him to be coherent having the image of God which he had, because fear paralyzes life.

Matthew 25:28-30: The final word of the master which clarifies the parable .

The master asks that the talent be taken away from him and given to the one who already has: For to everyone who has will be given more, and he will have more than enough; but anyone who has not, will be deprived even of what he has.” This is the key which clarifies everything. In reality, the talents, “the money of the master,” the goods of the Kingdom, are the love, service, sharing, the gratuitous gift. A talent is everything that makes the community grow and which reveals the presence of God. When one is closed in oneself out of fear of losing the little that one has, one loses even that little that one has, because love dies, justice is weakened, sharing disappears. Instead, the person who does not think in self and gives himself to others, grows and, surprisingly, receives everything which he has given and much more. “Because anyone who finds his life will lose it, but anyone who loses his own life for my sake will find it.” (Mt 10:39)

c) Deepening:

The Different Currency of the Kingdom:

There is no difference between those who receive more and those who receive less. All receive according to their capacity. What is important is that the gift is placed at the service of the Kingdom and that it

makes the goods of the Kingdom grow, which are love, fraternity, sharing. The principal key of the parable does not consist in producing talents but indicates the way in which it is necessary to live our relationship with God. The first two servants ask for nothing, they do not seek their own well-being, they do not keep the talents for themselves, they make no calculations, they do not measure. Very naturally, almost without being aware and without seeking any merit for themselves, they begin to work, in order that the gift received bears fruit for God and for the Kingdom. The third servant is afraid and, because of this, does nothing. According to the norms of the ancient law, he acts in a correct way. He remains within the established exigencies. He loses nothing, but neither does he gain anything. Because of this he loses even what he had. The Kingdom is a risk. The one who does not want to run risks, loses the Kingdom!

6. Psalm 62

In God Alone There is Rest for My Soul

In God alone there is rest for my soul, from him comes my safety: he alone is my rock, my safety, my stronghold so that I stand unshaken. How much longer will you set on a victim, all together, intent on murder, like a rampart already leaning over, a wall already damaged? Trickery is their only plan, deception their only pleasure, with lies on their lips they pronounce a blessing, with a curse in their hearts. Rest in God alone, my soul! He is the source of my hope. He alone is my rock, my safety, my stronghold, so that I stand unwavering. In God is my safety and my glory, the rock of my strength. In God is my refuge; trust in him, you people, at all times. Pour out your hearts to him, God is a refuge for us. Ordinary people are a mere puff of wind, important people a delusion; set both on the scales together, and they are lighter than a puff of wind. Put no trust in extortion, no empty hopes in robbery; however, much wealth may multiply, do not set your heart on it. Once God has spoken, twice have I heard this: Strength belongs to God, to you, Lord, faithful love; and you repay everyone as their deeds deserve

7. Final Prayer

Lord Jesus, we thank for the word that has enabled us to understand better the will of the Father. May your Spirit enlighten our actions and grant us the strength to practice that which your Word has revealed to us. May we, like Mary, your mother, not only listen to but also practice the Word. You who live and reign with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit forever and ever. Amen



Invest just five minutes a day, and your faith will deepen and grow—a day at a time.

15 NOV 2020 - THIRTY-THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Believe in magic—your own!

We each have a little something special we can call our own. Maybe it's school smarts or street smarts. Maybe you know your way around the halls of power or around the kitchen. Some are good with kids, others with elders, still others with sick or dying people. You might be great with people, or math, or words, or research. You could be physically strong or have that dogged ability to keep at a task when everybody else gives up. Do an assessment of your gifts and skills. Whatever your special magic is, put it at the disposal of grace.

Today's readings:

Proverbs 31:10-13, 19-20, 30-31; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-6; Matthew 25:14-30 ([157](#)).

"Master, you gave me five talents. See, I have made five more."

16 NOV 2020 - MEMORIAL OF GERTRUDE THE GREAT, VIRGIN

Mystic mysteries

Me, a mystic? Yes, you! Intimate union with Christ is called "mystical" because it participates in the mystery of Christ through the sacraments, the catechism says, and "God calls all of us to this intimate union with him . . ." But, you may be thinking, I don't have visions or experiences of ecstasy, and I definitely don't have stigmata, like a saint we remember today, Gertrude the Great, German Benedictine mystic of the 13th century. No matter, the catechism says, "The special graces or extraordinary signs of this mystical life are granted only to some for the sake of manifesting the gratuitous gift to all." Enjoy your slice of the mystery

Today's readings:

Revelation 1:1-4; 2:1-5; Luke 18:35-43 ([497](#)).

"Have sight; your faith has saved you."

17 NOV 2020 - MEMORIAL OF ELIZABETH OF HUNGARY, RELIGIOUS

Love the one you're with

As a young queen, Elizabeth of Hungary was so moved by the love of Saint Francis of Assisi that she took care of the sick and poor herself, tending to them like a servant in her own castle. Equally notable, though, is the loving relationship Elizabeth had with her husband, King Louis of Thuringia. Growing up together, their mutual affection was exceptionally deep as friends and confidants—long before they married and became parents. Most notably, they championed each other in the practice of their Christian faith. Today, pray gratefully for loved ones who have nurtured your own faith.

Today's readings:

Revelation 3:1-6, 14-22; Luke 19:1-10 ([498](#)).

"Half of my possessions, Lord, I shall give to the poor."

18 NOV 2020 - MEMORIAL OF ROSE PHILIPPINE DUCHESNE, VIRGIN

Pray always

One of Rose Philippine Duchesne's (1769-1852) biographers noted that she was born with a strong and dauntless will. She ignored family wishes and joined a French convent, intent on ministry to Native American peoples. Not until the age of 49 did she set sail for St. Louis, where her ministry of opening schools and orphanages remained much the same as in her native France. After many years of ministry, at the age of 72 Rose was asked to live among the Potawatomie Indians in Sugar Creek, Kansas. It was a short-lived assignment—her health was failing—yet Rose's ministry of prayer was recognized by the Potawatomie, who called her Woman-Who-Prays-Always. The witness of Saint Rose reminds us that where there is a will—our own and God's—there is a way. Ask for the grace today to seek and embrace God's will.

Today's readings:

Revelation 4:1-11; Luke 19:11-28 ([499](#)) or for the Dedication, Acts 28:11-16, 30-31; Matthew 14:22-33 ([679](#)).

"'Sir, your gold coin has earned ten additional ones.' He replied, 'Well done, good servant!'"

19 NOV 2020

The Omega point

These days Catholic laity and leaders don't typically dwell on the so-called "end times." Modern Catholics tend to be engaged in questions of how to live here and now for the common good and our personal salvation. Pope Francis frequently urges us on in righteous living. That is the context as our year moves toward its own "end times." The year 2020 has been hard around the world. We can hope and pray that 2021 will be gentler and promote that outcome in our own interactions with others in this contentious age. Put your trust in God, the Alpha and Omega.

Today's readings:

Revelation 5:1-10; Luke 19:41-44 ([500](#)).

"[Jesus] saw the city and wept over it, saying, 'If this day you only knew what makes for peace.' "

20 NOV 2020

Feed the children

Today is World Children's Day. It marks the anniversary of the 1959 signing of the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child. A fundamental right of every child is to live and grow. But a 2018 study by UNICEF found that more than 3 million children in the world die from malnutrition every year. Some people ask why God allows this to happen. But that misses the point. God commands us to feed the hungry, and Catholics have a serious obligation to do just that. Log on to Catholic Relief Services ([CRS.org](#)) and find out how you can help feed the starving children of the world.

Today's readings:

Revelation 10:8-11; Luke 19:45-48 ([501](#)).

"Yes, your decrees are my delight; they are my counselors."

21 NOV 2020 - MEMORIAL OF THE PRESENTATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

Your presence is requested

Celebration of Mary's presentation at the temple—a story from time-honored tradition rather than directly from scripture—took place as early as the sixth century in Jerusalem. The Eastern Church ran with it right away, but the West was slow to follow. At times the feast seemed to disappear entirely from the calendar, but finally in the 16th century it took its place as a universal feast. Though the feast points to Mary's lifetime of preparation for her sacred role in salvation, it also invites each of us to ponder for a moment: Suppose Jesus came knocking right now to bring you to the heavenly temple. Would you be prepared? If you feel a bit sloppy or unkempt, spiritually speaking, now is a great chance to do what is necessary to become a bit more presentable!

Today's readings:

Revelation 11:4-12; Luke 20:27-40 ([502](#)).

"Then they heard a loud voice from heaven say to them, 'Come up here.'"